

Dreadful Accident on the Sheffield and Manchester Railway.—On Friday, the 26th ult., a frightful accident occurred at Dinting viaduct, now in course of erection across Dinting Vale, a short distance from the present Glossop station on the Sheffield and Manchester line. The viaduct is of great height, rising with it at Broadbottom, and comprises three stone arches, raised from massive abutments or pillars. Our informant happened to be proceeding from the Glossop railway station, outside the coach, when the appalling event took place. He states that one of the three arches, partly formed with stone, and resting on the centres and other supports, suddenly and without occasion, when, in a moment afterwards, the ponderous erection fell to the earth, carrying with it the immensely large stones already laid towards forming the arch, and producing a fearful sound, resembling the discharge of artillery guns. On the highest part of the centre, when they fell, stood two workmen, who were precipitated among the heavy stones, timber, and mortar. One of them was found to have sustained a compound fracture of the elbow joint, with internal injuries, which brought on collapse, and in a few minutes the poor fellow ceased to exist. His fellow-worker was not so severely injured; fracture of the ribs had occurred, but with care and attention he is likely to recover. When our informant left, the cause of the accident had not been clearly ascertained. It was said that the centres, or timber supports of the arch, were not new and sound, but had been used on another part of the line, and had been here most improperly introduced. On this very important point no doubt an investigation will be immediately entered upon, and the truth ascertained.—*Manchester Times*.

Advantages of Low Fares on Railways.—The report of the North Shields Railway presents some curious particulars in respect of third-class passengers. The directors, with a view of restoring the former position of the railway, which had been greatly depressed, resolved on re-establishing third-class carriages at lower fares, and with more frequent trains. The result has been that in the half-year ending the 31st of December last, the number of passengers was 487,064 as compared with 381,522 passengers in the corresponding six months of the previous year, being an increase of 105,542, the increase in money being 3,471 £s. 6d. A very gratifying fact is also mentioned in the report—that the "the passengers carried since the opening of the railway amount, on the 31st of December, to the very great number of 3,369,491, and no accident to the life or limb of any passenger has ever occurred."

Statistics of Railway Traffic in 1843.—An interesting table, prepared from the returns of the past year, appears in the *Railway Magazine*. We have not room for the table, but quote the following results:—"The number of passengers was 17,255,085 during the past year, upon thirty railways; the total traffic receipts upon forty-four railways for the year, being 4,227,653£; making an average earning of 3.76£ per mile per annum, which is at the rate of 53¢ per mile per week. If we deduct 40 per cent. 1,331,062£, from the total receipts, as working expenses, we shall have less the passenger duty to Government, 5 (per cent. on passenger receipts), 179,662£, and income-tax, 61,509£, leaving the clear sum of 2,635,462£, to pay an average dividend per cent. of 4.18s. 10½d. upon the actual amount of capital already expended as per last reports, namely, 56,135,134£; which, of course, entirely excludes nominal capital and preference advantages. The traffic receipts for 1843 exceed those of 1842 by at least 470,000£, showing an increased average traffic of more than 9,000 per week in favour of 1843, which is, perhaps, a promising argument of railway prosperity, and may in some measure account for the great desire the public have shown lately for railway investments, in consequence of which, and the state of the money-market, railway shares have risen to an astonishing price."

A deputation, consisting of Mr. Glyn, Chairman of the London and Birmingham Railway Company; Mr. Bazendale, and several other gentlemen connected with railways, had an interview with the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone on Monday last, at the office of the Board of Trade.

RAILWAY ACTS.

Mr. GLADSTONE, as President of the Board of Trade, proposed to the House of Commons on Monday last the appointment of a select committee to consider the standing orders relating to railways, and the course which it might be expedient for Parliament to take with respect to applications for new lines or for new powers in relation to old lines. He intimated that it might be fitting to reduce the amount of deposit now required by the standing orders; and, having regard to the growing importance of the subject, he suggested that future railway bills should be referred to the Board of Trade before the introduction of them into the House of Commons. His present motion would not include any inquiry into the checks which it might be desirable to provide against the alleged abuses of existing railways. There were indications of a disposition to apply for competing lines; but such lines would not produce all those advantages to the public which are considered as attaching to competing lines in other matters; and he did not without hope that such advantages might be obtained from the good sense of the existing companies, without any unlimited encouragement to competing lines. The object he chiefly desired was, a reasonable arrangement for passengers of the third class, which he thought there was a disposition to concede, and which he believed would be attainable without breaking down the fair principle of the general charges.

Mr. Labouchere wished to make the terms of the reference to the committee a little more extensive, lest the committee should find itself wholly precluded from entering upon an inquiry into the arrangements of railway companies not seeking any further aid from Parliament. He could not think that competition was useful to the public in railway undertakings, and illustrated his opinion by the fact that parcels from Bath, of which it might be supposed that the Great Western Railway would have the entire monopoly, are frequently carried by the Southampton line.

Mr. Gladstone said, that when a certain progress had been made by the committee, such additional references as should then appear expedient might be added by new instructions from the House.

Mr. Roebuck was solicitous that nothing should be done that could fetter the House in examining and dealing with a subject so material to the public welfare. He insisted on the usefulness of rivalry by competing lines; and on the principle that Parliament, after passing an act of monopoly, had a right to interfere if that monopoly were not used as Parliament had expected it should be. The hardships now imposed upon third-class passengers on the Great Western line were an exemplification of this grievance. Having these views of the subject, he wished that there should be nothing to narrow the scope of the committee.

Mr. C. Russell (chairman of the Great Western Railway Company) gave some explanations respecting the accommodation of third-class passengers on that line, and stated that most of the companies were at this moment carrying this class at a positive loss.

Mr. Wallace contended for good accommodation to third-class passengers, and against the discretionary power of directors to raise fares.

Sir R. Peel enforced the principle, that there was a great distinction between parties coming for new enactments, and parties having invested their capital on the faith of enactments already existing. There might, indeed, be cases where Parliament would have a right to control even companies long since founded and seeking no new powers; but he would caution the House to pause in such interference. They ought not to interpose merely because some railways produced profits larger than had been expected; the Legislature in which should do that would be equally bound to compensate those lines which had been productive of a loss. But, undoubtedly, the Legislature would do quite fairly in checking abuse by authorizing lines that would have a competing effect; and that power of Parliament, and that probability of competition, constituted the true control on the existing bodies, who, he trusted, would see, in particular, that it was their interest to make fit provision for the third-class passengers.

Mr. S. Wortley was desirous of giving the widest possible scope to the inquiries of the committee.

Mr. P. Stewart trusted that, even if these inquiries should be limited in the beginning for the sake of convenience and despatch, the subject would afterwards receive a wider consideration.

Colonel Sibthorp enlarged upon the evil which railroads had produced in displacing the employments of those who were connected with the old roads and modes of travelling. He did not care how soon he saw all these railway schemes bankrupt.

After a few words from Mr. Plumptre and Mr. F. French, the motion was agreed to.

THE CANAL OF ALEXANDRIA.

THE Canopic mouth (of the Nile) is long since closed up by the mud of Ethiopia, and the Arab conquerors of Egypt were obliged to form a canal to connect this seaport with the river. Under the Mamelukes this canal had also become choked up, and her communication with the great vivifying stream thus ceasing, Alexandria languished—while Rosetta, the vampire, fed on her decay, and, notwithstanding her shallow waters, swelled suddenly to importance. When Mehemet Ali rose to power, his clear intellect at once comprehended the importance of the ancient emporium. Alexandria was then become a mere harbour for pirates—the desert and the sea were gradually encroaching on its boundaries—but the Pasha ordered the desert to bring forth corn, and the sea to retire, and the mandate of this Albanian Canute was no idle word—it acted like an incantation—the old Egyptian spirit of great works. Up rose a stately city, containing 60,000 inhabitants, and so suddenly yawned the canal, which was to connect the new city with the Nile, and enable it to fulfil its destinies, of becoming the emporium of three quarters of the globe. In the greatness and the cruelty of its accomplishment, this canal may vie with the gigantic labours of the Pharaohs. Three hundred thousand people were swept from the villages of the Delta, and heaped like a ridge along the destined banks of that fatal canal. They had only provisions for one month, and implements they had few or none; but the Pasha's command was urgent—the men worked with all the energy of despair, and stabbed into the ground as if it were their enemy; children carried away the soil in little handfuls; nursing mothers laid their infants on the shelterless banks; the scourge kept them to the work, and mingled blood with their milk, if they attempted to nourish their offspring. Famine soon made its appearance, and they say it was a fearful sight, to see that great multitude convulsively working against limit. As a dying horse lures the ground in his agony, they tore up the great contract—30,000 people perished, but the grim contract was completed, and in six weeks the waters of the Nile were led to Alexandria. The canal is forty-eight miles in length, ninety feet in breadth, and eighteen in depth; it was finished altogether in ten months, with the exception of the lock which should have connected it with the river; the Bey who had charge of this department lost his contract and his head.

—From "Episodes of Eastern Travel," in the *Dublin University Magazine*.

GOOD AND BAD ROADS.—The following table will show the occupiers of land, who by their teams and in their gigs are the most frequent travellers along the cross roads, how very expensive bad roads are to them, and how much it is their interest to endeavor to improve them, to which frequent gates are the greatest obstacles. Force required to draw a loaded cart, weighing 1,000 lbs.—

Turnpike road hard and dry	204 lbs
Ditto dirty	39
Hard compact loam	53
Ordinary bye-road	106
Turnpike road newly gravelled	143
Loose sandy road	204

From this it appears that there is more than three times as much force required in draught on a middling bye-road as on a hard turnpike road. No farmer makes money now-a-days by cart horse; he ought not, therefore, to wish to keep more than necessary; and good roads enable him to turn the keep of a cart horse into the more profitable animal, a cow or some sheep.—*Berke Chronicle*.